NATURAL HISTORY NOTES.

With Illustrations.

SNAKE POISONS.

Captain Douglas, R.N.R., H. M.'s Resident at Sĕlângor, has just furnished me with conclusive proof that the oft-repeated dictum that "the nervous system of a poison snake is proof against the specific action of its own poison" [Cassell N. H., vol. 4, p. 45] is incorrect. He recently irritated a cobra until, in striking at the stick with which he was touching it, the snake inflicted a well-marked wound on its own back. *In ten minutes it was dead.*

The same gentleman informs me that he recently captured an *ophiophagus elaps* (hamadryad) measuring 18 feet 6 inches! Tolerably large for a venomous snake, and that the most aggressive of any known.

A propos of snakes, residents would do well to provide themselves with the remedy which Mr. Knaggs has discovered—permanganate of soda. There is unmistakable evidence that it has saved life. Internal doses of strong spirit should be administered every five minutes after the permanganate has been injected into the wound.

Any reader of this Journal who knows of a case of death from snake bite within the last twenty-five years (excepting the case of the Malay who mistook a cobra for an eel and put his finger in its mouth) will greatly oblige by communicating the facts to me.

N. B. D.

PYTHON'S EGG.*

The species of Python whose egg is the subject of illustration is known as *python reticulatus* from the beautiful diamond-shaped reticulations which form its distinctive marks. Two others are described in popular natural histories, viz.:—*P. regius* and *P. sebœ;* a fourth variety found in Singapore and named *P. Curtus* being ignored. The latter has a *red* in place of an olive ground, and, as only one example—that in the Leyden Museum—has reached Europe, specimens command a high value, fifteen or twenty dollars being readily given at the Raffles Museum, which possesses the only two caught during the last few years.

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* The three coloured plates presented with this Number of the Journal are the gift of N. B. Dennys, Esq., Ph. D.—Ed.

The *python reticulatus* is frequently (and erroneously) called a boa constrictor, all *boas* being of American origin. All snakes of this species contradict the assertion in the Encyclopædia Britannica that "no reptile is known to hatch its eggs." The egg from which this drawing was made was detached from a mass of about one hundred, cemented together by a glutinous substance. Around this mass the female snake coils herself. Cold-blooded as snakes are, its temperature on such occasions rises to 75° Fahrenheit, which is maintained for 56 days, when the young begin to emerge from the shell. The latter resembles tough parchment, and is elastic to the touch. All the eggs in the mass described were found to contain live snakes about 16 inches long.

The Raffles Museum is indebted to the Mahâraja of Johor for this interesting addition to its collection.

N. B. D.

FLYING LIZARD.

This pretty little animal, of which a life-size illustration is given, abounds in Singapore, and is known as *draco volens.* The specimen from which the drawing was made gave me a slight shock by missing its leap and plunging between my collar and neck, causing much momentary discomforture, until its long tail sticking out made a companion exclaim "Why it's only a lizard!"

Few natural histories give any particulars of this interesting reptile, which is capable of a considerable length of flight, if such it can be termed. The eggs are tiny little things about the size of peas, but I have never succeeded in obtaining an embryo, or seeing a newly-hatched specimen. It may here be noted that no species of lizard whatever is in any sense poisonous, while very few possess teeth sufficiently developed to inflict a wound. Spiders are, like snakes, great enemies of lizards, the usual proceeding being to catch the latter asleep and swiftly weave a web round its mouth, after which the spider bites the lizard on the lip causing speedy death.

Readers interested in natural history might furnish interesting information by keeping this animal in confinement.

N. B. D.

SINGAPORE LOBSTER.

This crustacean has not hitherto been figured or described, and, though occasionally found in the Singapore markets, is by no means common. The illustration is exactly one-third of the natural size.

N. B. D.

FLOWERING BANANA.

This is the most brilliantly flowering of the *Musaceæ*, and is known to botanists as the *musa coccinea*, or "pisang sole" of the Malays. It has a triangular rose-coloured fruit, which is not eatable. Some fine examples may be seen in the public gardens, Singapore, near the orchid house, and it is rather surprising that so handsome and easily grown a plant has not found more favour amongst residents.

The flower is figured in "Choice Flowers, Fruits, and Leaves of Java" by Madame B. Hoola van Nooten, but the plate herewith was printed prior to the publication of that work, and was, at the time, the only coloured plate of the plant which had appeared.

N. B. D.

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